

Poet's Corner.

THE DE PROFUNDIS BELL.

BY MARIE IN THE AVE MARIA.

The day was dead. From the purple summits faded
Its last resplendent ray ;

And softly slept the wearied earth, o'er-shaded
By twilight's dreamy gray.

Then flowed deep sound-waves o'er the silence holy
Of nature's calm repose,

As from its lofty dome out-pealing slowly,
Through the still gloaming, rose
The deep and dirge-like swell
Of *De Profundis* Bell.

To heedful hearts each solemn cadence falling
Through twilight's misty veil,

An echo seemed of spirit voices calling
With sad, beseeching wail ;

And thus they spake in mournful intonation,
"Plead for us, brethren, plead !

From the drear depths of woe and desolation
Our cry of bitter need
Floats upward in the swell
Of *De Profundis* bell."

Then bowed each knee, that plaintive summons heeding,
And rose the blended sigh,

As incense breath of fond united pleading,
E'en to the throne on high :

"Hear, Lord, the cry of fervent supplication
Earth's children lift to Thee.

And from the depths of long and dread purgation,
The faith of captives free,
Ere dies on earth the swell
Of *De Profundis* bell."

If in Thy sight, scarce e'en the perfect whiteness
Of seraph robe is pure,

Shall mortals brave Thine Eyes eternal brightness,
Shall man Its search endure !

Ah ! trusting hope may meet the dazzling splendour
Of those celestial rays ;

And with Thee, Lord, is pardon sweet and tender
When contrite Sorrow prays.

Aye, Thou wilt lead from desert waste of sadness
Thy Israel's stricken band,

And Miriam's song of pure, triumphant gladness,
Shall, in Thy Promised Land,
Succeed the dirge-like swell
Of *De Profundis* bell."

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

IN every age of history, and in every nation acquainted with the first principles of civil government it has been laid down as a maxim, that every distinct community and every separate and idiosyncratic nation should have perfect domestic liberty, and the absolute and unfettered control of all matters which exclusively belong to them. This maxim has been established by modern political scientists as an inviolable principle, universally applicable, and essential for the contentment and prosperity of all peoples. But this principle does not imply that it is necessary that every distinct community or nation should have an absolutely independent existence. It may happen, as it has happened in past ages, that peoples essentially distinct and idiosyncratic are attached to each other by similarity of commercial and political interests, and individual connections, so closely as to render it extremely undesirable that they should exist as separate, independent and politically weak nations. In all general matters their interests may be identical, their combination is wise, just and expedient, and is the course pointed out alike by reason and experience. But at the same time their internal interests may be peculiarly different, may perhaps be as diverse as their foreign interests are similar. In such a case it would be injudicious, inexpedient, and contrary to the teachings of political science, to amalgamate absolutely. What form of government is the most applicable to people so circumstanced? "Political science," says Federalism, "let each community conduct the business which only concerns itself, let it have supreme control of all its domestic affairs, but let there be a combination for all general purposes, and let the various communities exist towards foreign governments as one homogeneous state.

From the very first dawn of civilization, from the earliest period when individuals allied themselves for common purposes and formed communities and states, the principle that laws should be formed by those for whose government they are intended has been recognised. It seems to be an inherent principle in man's nature, to repel the aggression of a foreign nation upon the land or state in which he was born, whether such aggression be territorial or legislative. This is not only justifiable, but praiseworthy, and has ever been lauded both in song and story from the earliest ages of the world's history. The patriot's praises are sung and his memory loyally cherished long after his bones have returned to their primeval dust, and in traversing the battle-fields of a country rendered sacred by the illustrious deeds of a nation's heroes, "sweet memory" recalls to the lover of his country recollections which cause the eye to glisten and touch the deepest emotional springs of the human heart. When after the destruction of the Primeval institutions in New Zealand, Sir George Grey proposed a modified form of Federal government, and one probably better adapted to the altered circumstances of the Colony than that which had hitherto existed, he was violently opposed, and even denounced

by men who were more fitted to tell the points of a bullock or the quality of a fleece than to sit at a nation's council board. Of course it mattered not to them that Sir George Grey had had a life-long experience of public affairs, that he had

"Moulded a nation's State decrees,
And shaped the whisper of the Throne."

when they were philosophising at the plough handle, or speculating on the digestibility of turnips. All this gave him no claim to deference or superiority, and the squatters of New Zealand, in their overwhelming vanity disputed the deductions of political philosophers and violated the plainest teachings of political science. Sir George Grey, in his work entitled the "Irish Land Question," asserts that without the control of its own affairs "no nation can be contented, prudent, or prosperous;" and at pages 18 and 19 of this work he demands with a rare brilliancy of language, and irresistible arguments, the concession of local self-government to Ireland. "The union of several Parliaments into one," he says, "charged with the minute special legislation upon so many points, in different countries, has thrown upon that one Parliament an amount of labour which it cannot perform. Hence its attention is distracted from its really important duties." He here refers to the House of Commons. And again:—"Give to Ireland a State Legislature and a State Executive in Dublin, secure thereby the residence of its ablest men in the country, open a fair field as ministers, legislators, orators, to its best and wisest men; afford from the same source, as would necessarily and certainly be done, occupation to Irish architects, sculptors, painters, and secure a resident aristocracy of worth, talent and wisdom, and you will at the same time restore the wealth, trade and commerce of Dublin and Ireland. Dumb Ireland will speak again. Half-inanimate Ireland will again awaken to national life, and breathe the breath of hope and freedom. Whilst by again accustoming the Irish people to the management of their own affairs, and to the administrative duties of the highest order, a willing people will be educated in that political knowledge which will enable them to put an end to the ills which afflict them, the cause and course of which none can understand so well as themselves."

Mr. Gladstone stated in 1872 that "the House of Commons is in a serious dilemma with regard to the transaction of its business, and the gravity of this dilemma is felt with a pressure which appears to increase from year to year. It had grown, it is growing, and he feared it would continue to grow."

From all this it is apparent that over-centralisation of the legislative business of any country, geographically or idiosyncratically divided is an evil, nay a curse. And of all the nations who have left "footprints on the sands of time" those whose institution were based on what we call the Federal principle stand pre-eminently the most glorious in arms, arts, and civilization. Was Peloponessus ever so great as when its petty independent states formed themselves into the Achaian League for purposes of reciprocal defence, while retaining unimpaired their cantonal freedom? Look at the mighty confederation of the United States of America, or of the German and Austro-Hungarian empires! Great Britain too has largely adopted the principle, and I hope the day is not remote when she will adopt it in its entirety.

Common reason ought to convince any person that a principle which applies to individual life, applies also to national life. Can any man's private business be conducted by another as efficiently as he would conduct it himself? Does any person presume to say that he has a keener appreciation of his neighbours' circumstances, and understands better all the minutiae of his private affairs, than he whose life-time has been spent in administering those affairs and thinking upon them? And in like manner, is it not unreasonable, and I might say preposterous, to expect the people of one nation to comprehend the domestic business and requirements of another nation better than those who have been born and grown up in the country and made its affairs their life-long study?

I am sanguine that the day will yet arrive when Great Britain will be constituted a great Federal nation, its three kingdoms enjoying absolute independence within the limits of their respective jurisdictions, and a great powerful Parliament to transact the Imperial business of our mighty empire in which the whole of its possessions will be represented. This would be a constitution worthy of Celt and Saxon, and worthy of the great destinies of our ancient isles. It would draw the colonies in closer connection to the mother country, and make them glory in being attached to a nation which confers upon its people political blessings unparalleled in the world's annals, and which cannot be rivalled in History's unwritten page.

Auckland, December 13th, 1877.

W. J. N.

The Holy Well of St. Winefride, in Wales, where the crutches and bandages deposited as offerings by those whose miraculous cures have been effected by the powerful intercession of the Saint, and by their own unshaken faith in her ministrant power, was recently visited by the British Archaeological Association, the members of which regarded these tokens as very instructive, as an instance of the late lingering of a thought and feeling which formerly pervaded the whole of the inhabitants of our land.—*London Universe*.

The Roman correspondent of one of the New York papers says:—Victor Emmanuel, whose annual income from the public treasury is about 3,500,000 dols. or nearly double what Victoria of England is paid, flings his money about in a prodigal manner, as if he had the exhaustless purse of Fortunatus in his pocket. His family have an additional 500,000 dols. a year among them. They live within their incomes, but his Majesty is considerably and continuously in debt, and every now and then his Minister of Finance has to execute the difficult and delicate duty of obtaining a large money vote, a Parliamentary "benevolence," to pay off the most pressing demands of the royal tradesmen. The King is rather popular than not with his Roman subjects. Accustomed as they have been in the Papal time to gentle manners and delicate ways, they scarcely understand the King, whose chief delight is in the sports of field and forest (at this moment and for weeks past he has been in his native Piedmont, hunting and shooting game and wild beasts of prey), and they smile, sometimes contemptuously at his rustic dress and address, which certainly have nothing princely in them.